

CITY EFFORTS TO RESOLVE NEEDLE EXCHANGE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES WITH KCHD (RETRACTABLE NEEDLE PILOT PROGRAM)

- Late September/Early October 2017 – Concern from CFD re: number of needle pick-ups and needles in abandoned structures with increase in fires. Also received request from Sacred Heart for sharps container so they could clean up the alley every morning before parents drop off their children. Set meeting with CFD leadership to discuss. Similar concerns from CPD beginning during the late summer months, including discussions about number of non-resident drug users coming into City due to needle exchange. CPD leadership meeting with Health Department and Sgt. Paxton directed to attend Health Dept. Board meetings.
- October 7, 2017 – At City/CFD request, Metro 911 established code for needle pickup calls to help the City accurately collect data on locations, numbers, and types of needles being picked up.
- October 13, 2017 – CFD leadership (Shaffer/Sutler/Hodges) and City Attorney phone call to KCHD regarding escalating complaints of discarded needles, particularly the Sacred Heart complaints due to presence of children and risk to parent volunteers, and to see if KCHD needles can be identified (over 8k per week @ this time per KCHD). Agreed to think about possible solutions and regroup in a few weeks. In interim, City identified newer technology retractable needles that could potentially be used in program and then set up follow-up call with KCHD.
- November 16, 2017 – Conference call with Dr. Brumage about implementing retractable needle pilot program with CFD identifying manufacturing partner. Program would allow for identification of source of discarded needles in community and promote safety for citizens and city workers encountering/picking up discarded needles. Health Department does not have funding to purchase needles (they are donated) and could not afford more expensive retractable needles. General agreement to proceed with program if City/CFD can get needles donated or find funding source for retractable needles. KCHD also working on mobile unit and other locations for needle exchange which should reduce number of non-resident drug users coming into downtown Charleston on Wednesdays.
- December 1, 2017 – CFD identifies possible manufacturer located in Texas to donate retractable needles. Request to Health Department for estimate of how many needles for up to 6-month program. KCHD indicates over 9200 per week (11,185 highest per week figure) over last 4 months and estimates 250,000 retractable needles needed for 6-month program. City sets up meeting with retractable needle manufacturer, CFD/CPD/City Attorney Offices, and KCHD.
- December 14, 2017 – Meeting with KCHD, CFD, CPD, and Retractable Technologies about using their product in the needle exchange. Meeting takes place in City Hall AV room. Needle manufacturer flies in from Texas. Tentative agreement made at meeting. RT and KCHD will work out logistics and provide information to City. City Attorney will put together MOU. Program to begin after holidays/new year, run for 6 months to a year and then reassessment by parties.

Basic Agreement: RT will provide retractable needles @ no cost in exchange for data collection to determine whether retractable product is successful, or if additional innovation is needed to make product suitable. RT willing to modify product based on data collection and also with ideas for disposal.

- January 16, 2018 – KCHD meeting in which retractable needle pilot program is apparently modified to include only 10-12 patients with a target start date of April 1, 2018. No City of Charleston representative in meeting. No notice to City/CFD of meeting and no follow-up with City or CFD after meeting.
- January 18, 2018: Brief discussion with Dr. Brumage after attendance at a Homeless Task Force meeting and request on update of when we can put together MOU and start date for retractable needle program. January 16, 2018, meeting not discussed and no mention of reducing retractable needle program to only 10-12 patients. According to Dr. Brumage, KCHD staff and RT having discussions and should be able to proceed with the program very soon. Tina Ramirez will follow up with City in the near future with logistical details. No new information from KCHD between January 18, 2018, and week of February 18, 2018.
- Week of February 19, 2018: Call from/to RT – program may not happen. John Hopkins taking over data collection, and RT not agreeable to methods, questionnaire. RT prepared to donate 250k needles for 100% retractable needle program, but Johns Hopkins representative and members of KCHD suggesting clients might not like retractable needles and pilot program may only be for a few patients. RT is told that Johns Hopkins representative focused on publishing results of a limited retractable needle study in conjunction with KCHD.
- Week of February 19, 2018: Call to Reinhman/Brumage re: information from RT and concerns that retractable needle program may not be implemented. Told pilot program on track for implementation on April 1 per Dr. Brumage. Tina Rameriz will follow up.
- February 26, 2018: Email from Rameriz stating KCHD ready to conduct pilot program with retractable syringes on April 1 and attached minutes from January 16 meeting. Minutes confirm concerns of RT. Pilot Program will be for “10-12 patients” only and Johns Hopkins, not RT, will be conducting data survey/collection/review. City Attorney updates CFD and CPD leadership that KCHD is not going forward with 100% retractable needle pilot program.
- March 5, 2018: Ordinance introduced that would make possession of needles for illicit drug use illegal under City Code.